

INFORMATION REPORT

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18 MAY 51

COUNTRY USSR (Turkmen SSR)

DATE DISTR.

SUBJECT The Soviet-Iranian Border in the vicinity of Serakhs

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(LISTED BELOW)

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1. At a point on the Hari Rud (river) just before the wooden watch-tower of Serakhs, a narrow wooden bridge over a branch of the Hari Rud can be seen. This bridge is suitable for use by light motorized vehicles.
2. A direct road, three kilometers in length, leads from the above watch-tower to Soviet Serakhs (36-31N, 61-13E). The road is dirt and is in poor condition because of bad maintenance.
3. A crooked street within Serakhs divides the town into two distinct sections: a southern section which is inhabited by civilians and workers and a northern section which consists of military garrisons and residential quarters for officers and non-commissioned officers. Civilian dwellings are old and are in appalling condition; installations of the north section resemble those of the military camps which were set up in Iran during the occupation of Iran by Allied Forces during World War II.
4. A few Turkmen civilians were observed in Serakhs dressed in shamefully dirty, shabby, old clothes. Non-Russian* children went bare-headed and bare-footed and some were observed carrying loads of logs upon their backs. Inhabitants of the town appeared fretful and showed no liveliness.
5. The streets and kutches (narrow streets) and the position of the town are not in conformity with the first impression one gets on viewing the town from a distance. The town is in ruins, full of dirt and rubble and many broken walls and old buildings.
6. In the center of town there is a school (three grades only) for Russian* children. The school building is prominent and catches the eye.
7. Alternating current is used for lighting in Soviet Serakhs. This current may be used only after sunset for five hours. The electricity is mostly for the exclusive use of garrison and military officials. About 30 lights are installed along the frontier margin but these serve little use for lighting purposes.

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8. [REDACTED] in December 1950, military formalities were not observed nor were they obligatory. In instances when saluting was observed, informant states that the act was artificial and was used merely for the purpose of impressing informant.
9. Traveling between the town of Serakhs and the Soviet post of Daulatabad (Dowlatabad, 36-21N, 61-08E), one crosses eight wooden bridges, six of which are safe and cross branches of the Hari Rud. Traces of what formerly was a road can be followed to the Daulatabad post.
10. From Daulatabad to Noruzabad (36-14N, 61-11E) heavy truck and cart traffic has worn a motorable track, not wide enough to permit vehicles to pass one another, behind the heights.
11. There is a road block opposite the Noruzabad post at the junction of the road leading to the Noruzabad post and the road from Pul-i-Khatum (Pul-e-Khatum, 35-57N, 61-08E) to the Pul-i-Khatum post. This block consists of an iron bar mounted on two pivots. An armed sentry is on duty at this point.
12. From Noruzabad toward Shirtapeh (36-00N, 61-07E) and Pul-i-Khatum a road has been worn by traffic movement over a long period of time; a portion of this road runs behind the heights, and sections of the road run alongside the river. Two kilometers from Pul-i-Khatum the road branches left and continues toward the Gaz-Gazi post. The road continues for nine kilometers and it is possible to proceed by automobile for an additional kilometer. After that it is necessary to continue on horseback.
13. At the point where it is necessary to go on horseback there is a spring, the waters of which flow over a nearby field. A narrow horse trail leads through the field. The trail is flanked by the Zoqqum heights and is called the "lime mouth" (Dahaneh Ahaki). If one follows the trail for awhile, the Hari Rud and the lower Garmab come into sight.
14. No plowed strips were observed east of the Soviet posts in December 1950. The ground in this area is covered with brush and qum (sic).
15. Between Serakhs and the Soviet post of Daulatabad there is a big kolkhoz. A small kolkhoz consisting of about seven or eight families is located between Noruzabad and Sangar.
16. All the way along the road there are small wooden poles with brooms fastened to their tops. The poles are installed either on the left or right side of the road and apparently help motorists and travelers keep to the road in time of heavy snows, fog, or bad weather. At certain spots along the road the ground seems to be plowed.
17. Between Serakhs and Pul-i-Khatum telephone poles which supported thick cables were observed.
18. Gasoline used in the Soviet jeeps had a very repulsive odor and seemed unrefined.
19. The Soviet posts are lighted at night by small electric lights. Current is obtained from windmill-powered generators or storage batteries.
20. All sentries at the Soviet posts were young, between 22 and 27 years of age. They were armed with five-shot Soviet rifles and twenty-shot automatic rifles.
21. The sentries' clothes were made of plain cloth, usually cotton, of the type made in their own native town.

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Comment: Presumably this term is used to distinguish the native Turkmen population from members of the families of great Russian officials residing in the area.

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-2-